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Ex-General Provided Arms Channel

The following dispatch is based on reporting by Fox Butterfield, Jeff Gerth and Bernard E. Trainor and was written by Mr. Butterfield.

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 5 — Unable to rely fully on conventional Government channels, Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North apparently turned to a network of former intelligence agents and arms dealers run by Richard V. Secord, a retired major general, and his Iranian business partner to help manage the Administration's arms deal with Iran and the diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan rebels.

A senior intelligence official said today it was this informal network, not the Central Intelligence Agency, that arranged the diversion of millions of dollars to the Nicaraguan rebels. He insisted that the C.I.A.'s role was limited to the delivery of arms to Iran, a role approved by President Reagan.

Congressional investigators, in an effort to test this claim, are closely examining the activities of Mr. Secord and his partner, Albert Hakim, an Iranian arms dealer.

According to Congressional investigators and associates of Mr. Secord and his partner, Mr. Hakim, the two men were able to provide Colonel North with a ready-made framework for international arms shipments and counterinsurgency warfare outside normal Government channels.

Colonel North first met Mr. Secord in 1981 when Mr. Secord was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense with a special interest in the Middle East and helped the Reagan Administration lobby for the disputed sale of Awacs planes to Saudia Arabia.

'Had Open Line to Ollie'

It is not known what arrangements were made between Colonel North and Mr. Secord in the Iranian arms and contra supply operation.

But a former business partner of Mr. Secord's, who also helped ship supplies to the contras, said today that "Secord had an open line to Ollie North when he wanted it."

As pieced together from interviews with former colleagues, the investigators and military and intelligence officers, Mr. Secord and Mr. Hakim, an Iranian arms dealer, each emerge as key figures who provided important parts of the unusual network.

What Mr. Secord provided, these sources say, were extensive contacts in the C.I.A., the Defense Department and the National Security Council as well as in the Middle East and indirectly in Latin America. Mr. Secord's ties date back to the late 1960's when as an Air Force pilot he was secretly attached to the C.I.A. mission in Laos running the clandestine war there against the North Vietnamese, friends say. It was

here he developed friendships with men who would go on to become senior intelligence officials. Last year these colleagues, who had also had experience in Latin America, evidently helped him draw on an informal brotherhood of former employees of Air America, the shadowy C.I.A. owned airline in Indochina, to help staff the supply operation against the contras, the sources report.

The pairing of Mr. Secord and Mr.

Hakim resulted from one of those contacts as well. In the mid-1970's, Edwin P. Wilson, a C.I.A. contract employee who would later be convicted of selling weapons to Libya, introduced the two, according to one of Mr. Hakim's business associates. The meeting took place in Teheran when Mr. Secord had risen to be chief of the Air Force military assistance group to Iran. In Mr. Wilson's trial, Mr. Secord acknowledged he had known him for about a decade, and though Mr. Secord was never indicted in the case, he resigned abruptly from the Air Force in 1983 after suspicions were raised about their relationship.

Mr. Hakim, a dealer in arms and related equipment, contributed a familiarity with Secret Swiss bank accounts and the commercial arms community. He has also admitted making payoffs to Iranian military officers. An Iranian who is now a naturalized American citizen, Mr. Hakim was the founder of Stanford Technology Trading Group International Inc. Mr. Secord became president of the concern after his retirement from the Air Force.

There is new evidence tying Stanford Technology to the Iran-Contra operation. One company document obtained by The New York Times shows that the firm's Swiss address in 1984 was the same as that of the Swiss financial company that has been widely reported as the conduit for transferring profits from Iranian arms sales to the Contras in Nicaragua.

Earlier Indications Confirmed

These findings tend to confirm earlier indications linking Mr. Secord and Stanford Technology to the supply operation for the contras. This evidence includes records of more than two dozen telephone calls from rebel safe houses in El Salvador to Stanford Technology's office in northern Virginia. In addition, two former members of the air crews that carried out the secret supply runs, both veterans of Air America in Laos, say they were told Mr. Secord was the main figure behind their recruitment.

Mr. Secord, a graduate of West Point, could not be reached for comment. A secretary at Stanford Technology's office in suburban Washington said she had been instructed not to comment on anything, including giving the name of the firm.

Richard N. Janis, a Washington lawyer who has represented Mr. Hakim, did not return phone calls to his office.

A former colleague of Mr. Secord's in the Air Force said he had spent almost all of his career in covert operations and that he had a shadowy, secret side. "He always seemed to be working some hidden agenda," the officer said.

West Point Graduate

Mr. Secord graduated in the bottom half of his class at West Point, where his company commander was Alexander M. Haig Jr.

A fellow officer said when Mr. Secord was sent to Vietnam in 1962, as part of the First Air Commando Wing, a special operations unit, he distinguished himself as a pilot flying T-28 fighters against the Vietcong. "He was a heck of a good pilot," the officer said, and "a darn fine Air Force officer, a dedicated patriot who took on the tough jobs."

Mr. Secord served in Indochina again

from 1966 to 1968, when he was officially stationed at Udorn Air Force Base in Thailand but was actually working with the C.I.A. in Laos, fellow officers say. It was here he also met Thomas Cline, a career C.I.A. agent. Mr. Secord later acknowledged in the trial of Mr. Wilson. Mr. Cline, a big, bluff man, had previously been stationed in Miami after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. There he was the "control" officer for a group of Cuban exiles and tried to carry out sabotage raids inside Cuba, according to Peter Maas, in his book "Manhunt," about the Wilson arms scandal and the C.I.A.

Friend of Shackley's

Through Mr. Cline, Mr. Secord also became friends with Theodore G. Shackley, the C.I.A. station chief in Vientiane, associates say. Mr. Shackley had previously been station chief in Miami, and would go on to be station chief in Saigon in the early 1970's before rising to be deputy director of operations in the agency, or head of clandestine operations.

It was Mr. Cline, according to several associates, who earlier this year helped recruit a team of dozen pilots, technicians and cargo handlers from former employees of Air America to staff the contra supply operation. Whether Mr. Shackley had any role is unclear, but associates say the two men have remained close friends and had numerous business dealings both in Europe and the United States.

Mr. Secord's other interest from his early days was Iran. He was posted there intermittently from 1963 to 1965 and again in the late 1970's when he headed the Air Force advisory group. In 1980 he was deputy head of a planned mission to rescue the American hostages in Iran that was never carried out.

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It was during his time as head of the Air Force advisory group in Teheran that Mr. Secord met Mr. Hakim. Mr. Hakim then represented American and other Western companies in Iran through his concern, Multi-Corp International Ltd. In 1974 he had also set up Stanford Technology in Geneva with an office in California. The company, according to a brochure, sold security, intelligence and electronic warfare equipment.

Testified in Connecticut

In 1983 Mr. Hakim testified in a civil case in Connecticut about payoffs he had made in Iran in the 1970's to both senior and lower level military officers when he represented the Olin Corporation and its Winchester ammunition unit. The Wall Street Journal has reported. Mr. Hakim said the payoffs were part of some \$6 million in commissions he received from the American company.

Among Mr. Hakim's associates was Mr. Wilson, who is now serving a lengthy Federal prison sentence. "Albert was enamored with the C.I.A.," said one of his former business associates.

The associate recalled a conversation in the Teheran Intercontinental Hotel, at which he was present, in which Mr. Hakim told Mr. Wilson, "I'll make you wealthy if you give me your C.I.A. contacts."

Mr. Wilson replied, according to the source, "I'm already wealthy." Mr.

Hakim then added, "I'll make you even wealthier."

Lent Money to Wilson

After that meeting Mr. Hakim lent money to Mr. Wilson. And though the two men eventually had a falling out, Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Hakim to Mr. Secord, who had just been made a Brigadier General and headed the military assistance group in Iran, the source said.

In 1984, Stanford Technology was liquidated in Switzerland, though in the meantime Mr. Hakim had set up a related company, Stanford Technology Trading Group International, with offices in northern Virginia, San Jose, Calif., and Geneva.

According to credit reports and the accountant for the company, Robert Bullard, the concern continually lost money. However, a source familiar with the company said this was for tax purposes and Stanford Technology did tens of millions of dollars of business overseas. Mr. Hakim also had a number of other Swiss companies and had frequent dealings with Swiss banks, according to documents and former business associates.

A 1984 letter by Mr. Secord, using the stationery of Stanford Technology Trading, listed the company's Geneva address at 3 Thury. That address, a squat one-story building, is also the location of Compagnie de Services Fiduciaires, or C.S.F., a Swiss concern that has been linked to the diverted Iranian arms funds as well as supplies for the contras.

In Cayman Islands Account

The Times of London, quoting sources familiar with the transactions, said \$18 million from the Iran arms sales was paid into the Swiss company's account in the Cayman Islands.

The chairman of C.S.F., Jean de Senarclens, a Geneva lawyer, has denied any wrongdoing, but declined to discuss the activities of the company other than to say Mr. Hakim was a client.